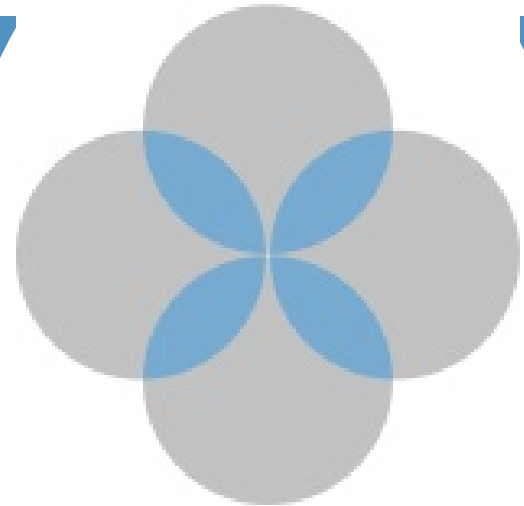


# Building Your Adaptive Leadership Skills



Prepared for **FORHP Rural Partnership Development Meeting**  
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*CRL Consulting is the Technical Assistance partner for the Network Planning Grantees.*

# Your Real, Sticky Challenge

- Rural health network efforts always present sticky, complex challenges that limit progress
- May have been dealing with it for a while
- Tried solutions but still there
- Might even have had consultants to try to help
- Write down your sticky challenge in a sentence or two
- Think for a moment and list what is driving the challenge
- Think about what you have tried to solve it and why it was insufficient

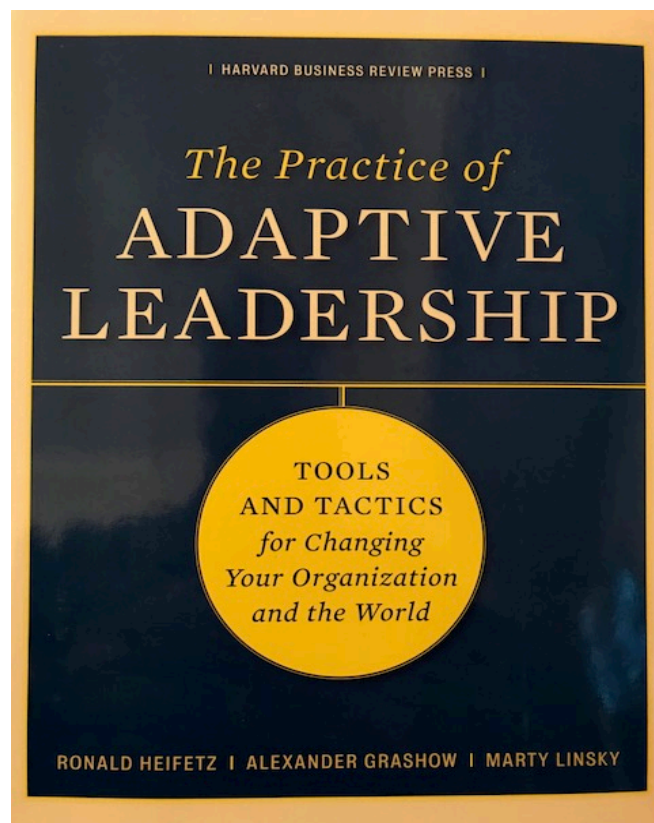


# Your Real, Sticky Challenge: How Will You Get Unstuck?

- Would you use a screwdriver to paint a portrait?
- What if you are using the wrong tool to solve your challenge?
- Maybe you need the screwdriver for some aspects of your work AND need another tool for other aspects
- Important to recognize the nature of your challenge and match the approaches to fit
- Recognize “Technical” and “Adaptive” challenges
- Apply the right leadership approach for the challenge



# Leadership for Adaptive Challenges



# Technical vs. Adaptive Challenges

Adapted from *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, Heifetz, R; Grashow, A; Linsky, M

## Technical

- May be complex and critically important but problem is clear
- Have known solutions
- Can be resolved by
- Applying current structures and procedures

## Adaptive

- Problem definition not clear
- No set of known solutions, requires learning
- Requires shared strategies among stakeholders = collaboration
- Require changes in peoples'/partners' beliefs, habits and loyalties



# Technical vs. Adaptive Challenges

Adapted from *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, Heifetz, R; Grashow, A; Linsky, M

## Technical

- Led by authority
- It's about following protocol
- Compliance
- Linear approach to throughput – manufacturing model
- Often, circumscribed benefit or mitigation
- Ex. building a hospital, brain surgery, space mission

## Adaptive

- Led by collaborative influence
- It's about scanning and sense-making to co-create shared deeper understanding of the issue, past and future
- Co-creation among stakeholders of new strategies begging change
- Unpredictable course
- More inclined towards pro-action and strategic value
- Ex. harmonious partnership, health equity



# Leadership As Fit

Adapted from Human Systems Dynamics Institute

- Why do leaders succeed and fail?
- Not just leadership skill, dealing with complex human systems
- Spectrum of leadership approaches from more authoritative to more collaborative
- Effective leaders apply the right approach to the context = fit
  - ✓ They co-evolve with the environment - structured and demanding when needed or more open to shared exploration when more appropriate



# Adaptive Leadership Qualities

- Comfortable working with ambiguity
- Connected to purpose - Applies both “head” and “heart”
- Constantly scanning and sense-making as first nature
- Understands role/limitations of Authoritative vs Collaborative
- Experiments with smart risk-taking
- Learns and adapts

Adapted from: Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*, 2009





# Leadership Approaches to Challenges

## Technical

- Control (Authority)
- Predictability
- Accountability
- Reliability
- Stability
- Maintenance

## Adaptive

- Emergence
- Surprise
- Innovation
- Creativity
- Patterns (sense-making of the complex systems)
- Creative Destruction



# Example: Getting Unstuck with Adaptive Leadership

- Members of your Network Board are not engaged. Interest is waning. Fewer and fewer stakeholders attend the meetings. Only a couple of partners are participating in the updating of the strategic planning.
- What do you do?



# Example: Getting Unstuck with Adaptive Leadership

## Technical (Transactional) Approaches

- Send additional email reminders of meetings
- Remind partners of responsibilities in their MOU
- Shame them
- Antagonize them
- Threaten expulsion

## Adaptive Approaches

- Be genuinely curious about the underlying causes
- Explore honestly with partners why loss of interest and/or trust in the network
  - ✓ Has mission lost appeal?
  - ✓ Don't see enough effective action?
  - ✓ Perceive power imbalance?
  - ✓ Low value proposition?
- Engage with partners to co-create the strategies that all would value and get you unstuck – esp. if you need to evolve!
- Implement strategies earnestly
- Have honest feedback and adjustment
- Reinforce the refreshed mission and culture



# Exercise: Unstick your Sticky Challenge

- Get your Sticky Issue
- Reflect and bullet:
  - Be honest and note real Drivers and Influences of the sticky issue
  - Identify any Technical (Transactional) approaches to apply/re-apply
  - Be reflective and generate ideas of Adaptive approaches that may address those honest underlying causes
  - Be excited about how you are generating new ideas through REFLECTION and EMBRACING what you DIDN'T KNOW to finally get you and partners unstuck
  - Be ready to share with others in the session
  - Consider this ADAPTIVE, REFLECTIVE approach as an ongoing STRATEGY

